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TAGS: PGOV PTER ECON I2 IR  
SUBJECT: BABIL GOVERNOR DISCUSSES RECONSTRUCTION, SADR MEETING,  
SECURITY

REF: HILLAH 85

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REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

**¶1.** (C) Summary: On July 5, Babil Governor Salem Saleh Mahdi Al-Muslimawi discussed his security and reconstruction with Third Infantry Division Deputy Commanding General (DCG), MNF-I Strategic Effects Deputy Commander Brigadier General and PRT representatives at the Regional Embassy Office in Babil. Al-Muslimawi sounded a positive tone when comparing Babil's economic progress in 2007 with that of previous years, noting that Iraqis were gaining the experience necessary to execute budgets and complete projects. On the security front, the governor discussed the May 29 meeting of regional governors with Moqtada Al-Sadr in Najaf. Al-Muslimawi said that he and his fellow governors countered Al-Sadr's calls for opposition to the Coalition. When pressed by the DCG to provide a more public and robust stance against militia -- specifically JAM -- activity, the governor adopted a defensive posture. End summary.

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GOVERNOR: '07 RECONSTRUCTION EFFORTS ON TRACK  
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**¶2.** (C) On July 5, Babil Governor Salem Saleh Mahdi Al-Muslimawi met with Third Infantry Division Deputy Commanding General (DCG) Ed Cardon, MNF-I Strategic Effects Deputy Commander Brigadier General Kevin Bergner and PRT representatives at the Regional Embassy Office in Al-Hillah. The meeting opened with Al-Muslimawi noting progress on the reconstruction front, citing the province's execution of an alleged 25.1 percent of its reconstruction budget (to be reported septel) just ahead of the June 30 Ministry of Finance deadline. The governor contrasted favorably this year's progress to last year's stagnation, in which a scant 40 percent of the budget was disbursed, and attributed the improvement to increased experience on the part of Iraqis. That said, Al-Muslimawi acknowledged the continuing obstacles toward greater progress due to continuing instability in North Babil. The governor also opined that Coalition forces need to spend more money in the "right" places in Iraq (NFI) and asked if it would be possible to have an American supervise all reconstruction projects in his province. (Note: The Local Governance Project (LGP) is providing such support. End note.)

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REGIONAL GOVERNORS' MEETING WITH SADR IN NAJAF  
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**¶3.** (S) The rest of the discussion centered on security, particularly efforts against JAM elements targeting Coalition forces. DCG presented the governor with photographs of Iranian-made mortars seized recently from a Babil Office of the Martyr Sadr (OMS) and called on the governor to offer a more

public and robust stance against the militias. Al-Muslimawi claimed that he and his fellow governors traveled to Najaf on May 29 to "explain the situation in Iraq to Moqtada." Al-Muslimawi further alleged that while Al-Sadr called for a release to all prisoners who had not killed Iraqis and opposed the "occupation" forces, he and his fellow governors contended that Coalition forces were in Iraq to help. The governor added that he considered this meeting with Al-Sadr to be only an "initial meeting." When DCG stressed the need to emphatically call for an end to militia activity and attacks on Coalition forces in the next meeting, Al-Muslimawi countered that he had already told Al-Sadr that the governors could not follow his program. The governor concluded his remarks with an off-hand request that a new Iraqi Army (IA) unit (NFI) be sent to Al-Hilla to train security forces. (Note: A new IA unit has already been sent. It is unclear if the governor is referring to an additional unit. End note.)

¶4. (C) Comment: Both military and PRT elements have urged the governor and several other provincial leaders to denounce the militias and their activities (reftel). However, these leaders have not followed through with promises of public denunciation and continue to demonstrate a lack of support for the Babil security forces who battle these militant factions daily in the province. Looming elections also play a factor in officials' reluctance to speak out against militias. While officially non-partisan, Al-Muslimawi has close ties to the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (ISCI), the dominant but extremely unpopular ruling party of the province. For months, the governor's maneuverings have been guided by the goal of consolidating ISCI's grip on power prior to provincial elections, elections in which the Sadrists have the inside edge due to their support in providing social services. Any actions or statements by the governor will be taken with an eye toward how it affects his chances of staying in office. End Comment.

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